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Douglas alumni take CBC ComedyCoup by storm

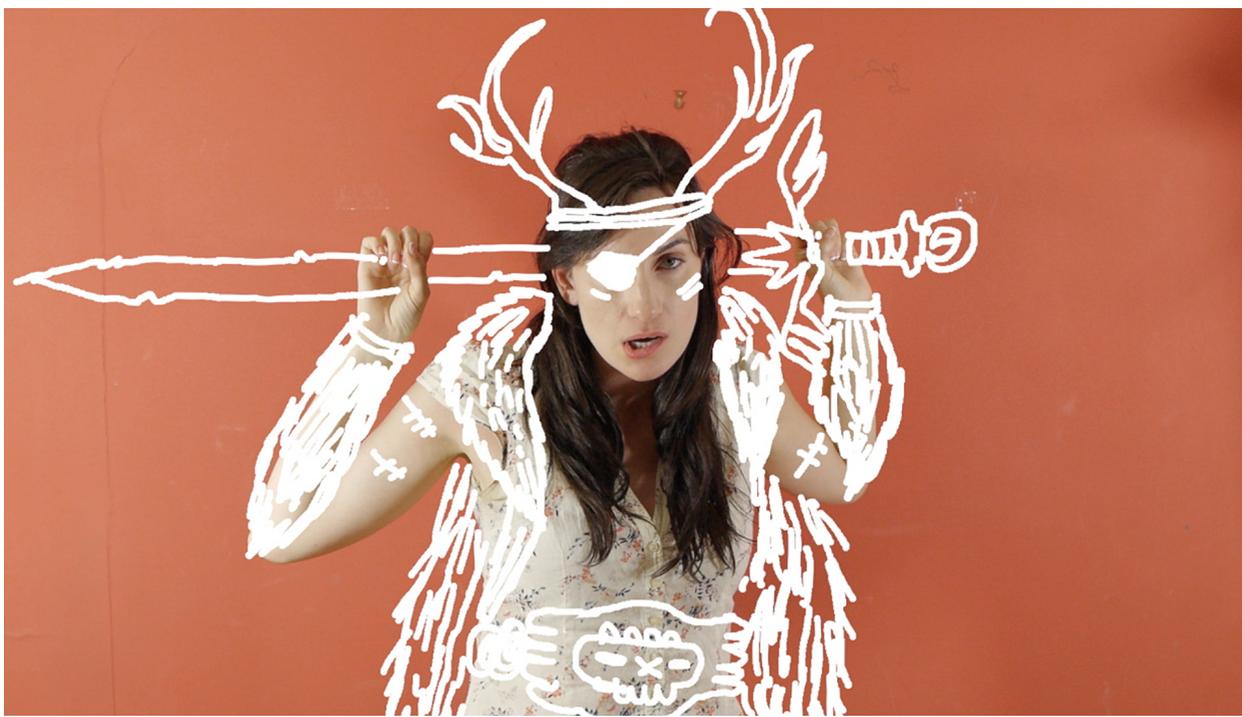
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‘Roll for Damage’ brings role-playing game to life

By **Cheryl Minns**, Arts Editor

Grab a pen and paper, put on imaginary armour, and get ready to storm the castle in the potential new comedy series *Roll for Damage*, a project by Max Mitchell and Adam Pateman in the CBC ComedyCoup competition. Each week the crew produces new content for the show as part of the competition’s challenges, trying to gain viewers’ votes and win the grand prize of having the show produced by CBC.

Roll for Damage follows a call centre employee (Ivan Decker) who joins a *Dungeons and Dragons* group with four young adults (including Pateman) seeking adventure and escape from their mundane lives. While playing the game, the characters live out their fantasies in animations that appear over the live-action scenes, drawn by cartoonist Brian Fukushima.

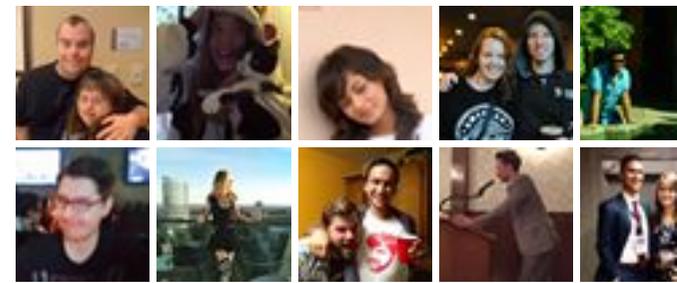
“Brian’s ability to draw over the footage as an extension of the characters’ imaginations is a very cool element,” Pateman told the Other Press. “You get this boundless opportunity to do anything—

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almost like a cartoon show—whereas you can see very clearly that these are drawn imaginations above their heads and they’re still grounded in this reality, so it doesn’t get too fantastical.”

Along with the animation, the pen-and-paper gaming aspect of the show allows the characters to reveal aspects of their personalities in unconventional ways.

“Dungeons and Dragons is fascinating from a physiological point of view. You can learn a lot about people when you free them to do whatever they like in a world without real-life consequences,” Mitchell wrote to the Other Press. “I’m excited to use that as a method to explore Roll For Damage characters’ psyches.”

Mitchell and Pateman each have personal experience with pen-and-paper games, where they have gotten deeply involved in the storytelling side of the game.

“When we played, we were more focussed on weaving a ridiculous story, meeting new characters, exploring the world around us, and basically anything else that would test our dungeon master’s creativity,” wrote Mitchell, referring to the dungeon master who acts as a narrator during the game and describes the scenes and events that occur.

Actor Andrew Barber realized the show’s potential when he first signed on to the project.

“The Dungeons and Dragons fan base is really huge, so when Max was pitching me on the show I thought right away that, regardless of what happens, it’s a good idea to attempt this kind of thing,” he said to the Other Press.

“I hope that people who play Dungeons and Dragons enjoy it, and that it does it justice.”

Outside of the gaming aspect, Mitchell and Pateman hope to show off their hometown of Vancouver and film the series around the city, which they feel would be a unique aspect of their show.

“I don’t think Canadian television has a lot of representation of Vancouver in it,” Pateman said. “One thing we’d really like to do is showcase what it’s like to live in Vancouver and what it’s like to be

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involved in a world where you have a bunch of friends get together and play this game in this setting that's very unique to Canadian television.”

Mitchell, Pateman, and Barber met in high school and put together sketch comedy performances, including a Fringe Festival production. They attribute some of their live performance skills to their student experience in Douglas College's theatre program.

“The theatre background really boosted me up into being able to tackle improv in a better way. That excelled me fairly quickly into being good at improv, enough to get paid for it,” said Barber, who performs with TheatreSports.

“I learned an incredible amount about acting in the short time I was there,” Mitchell wrote. “Allan Lysell and Cheryl Swan are exceptional teachers.”

Pateman added, “We all kind of ended up at Douglas College. First Max went, and then I went, and then Andrew went. We just kept passing on the torch because we were having such a good time.”

To learn more about Roll for Damage, check out the CBC ComedyCoup website at comedycoup.cbc.ca/roll-for-damage



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